Statement by
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Riverside, California
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The braceros are creating many social problems in this country. I should know because it is my business to know. I am a professional social worker and I work full time with the Spanish speaking community. In the first place many braceros are marrying our local girls. How can you expect otherwise? This happens whenever there is a large scale invasion of any country by unattached men. Look at what happened in Japan and Italy and Germany, when those countries were occupied by American soldiers and they were supposed to be our enemies! This marriage between braceros and local girls creates a number of problems, some of which may not show up fully for several years. To have an idea what I mean you have to know something about customs in Mexico. Women there are in very much uf an inferior position to men. The men treat them like dirt. The men are accustomed to having the women at their beck and call and to doing whatever they want; so what happens is that the men will grequently go back to Mexico abandoning their wife and children here. Maybe they get bored with them and just slip away. Maybe they already have a wife and children in Mexico. Maybe the husband asks the wife to go with him, but the wife does not want to go back to Mexico or maybe the husband is simply shipped back because his contract expires and he can't get a visa to return. There are ~~large numbers of these~~ a large number of these broken families which are coming to our attention and coming to the attention of welfare departments. Sixty per cent of the aid to needy children in this county is going to the Spanish speaking population, although this group only makes up ten per cent of the total county. It is my personal estimate that of the 60% a good 40% could be traced to braceros who have come and gone.

Now I haven't even mentioned the big problem of illegitimate children who are left behind by the Nationals. I know there are many of them and the Welfare department knows there are many of them and is worried about the problem. But they are hiding the true figures. They are afraid of getting in trouble with the County Board of Superfisors, most of whom are growers. Precisely the people who are responsible for the braceros being here in the first place.

Now we have here a time-bomb which is going to go off a few years from now. All these broken homes and all these illegitimate children are going to make for a great deal of juvenile delinquency. It is bound to come and we had better brace ourselves for it.

Now I will give you another example about what I mean about a social problem and that is education. After many years of fighting fierce battles, we finally managed to break down pretty well the segregated school system here in Riverside. There used to be practically two separate schol systems, one for Anglos and one for the Spanish speaking. It wasn't easy to overcome this, but we did it. Now what happens, we are having these children of the braceros coming in from homes where the father speaks no English and so once again we have to have classes which are expecially geared to the Spanish speaking. I don't hesitate to say that in this way the braceros program has set us back a whole generation in our efforts to become intergrated.

Another problem obviously, is the displacement of local workers. We work a lot with young people here at the Settlement and time and time agin they come to me and they ask if I can help them with summer employment. There was a time ± not too many years ago when we had no trouble in this regard. One could always spend the summer in the orchards picking valencias or lenons, but no more. These young fellows can't get jobs like that any more, because the jobs are all filled by braceros. The braceros can work faster than a young hich school kid and the high school kids cannot compete and once he has a bracero under contract the grower can honestly say this job is filled and I am sorry but I have no job for you.

The fact of the matter is that whatever the law says the growers and the farm placement people and the immigration servies and everybody else involved, is simply not interested in the problems of the Mexican-American. They are interested primarily in getting a cheap labor force. A labor force they can herd around, a slave labor force. If this were not true, if they sincerely wanted to hire domestic labor, if they sincerely wanted to do something about the problems of Mexican-Americans they

could prove it easily enough by letting us organize. Which is the only way we can survive in farm labor. But they have proved their intentions by spending millions of dollars to break our attempts to organize. We had a union of Mexican workers here in the 1930's but they poured in the money and they broke this effort the way they have broken all the others.

The Immigration and Naturalization Service has its hand in this too, for they are the ones who give the visas. It is very strange that the nomber of Mexican nationals they are willing to admit on this semi-permanent basis varies directly with the need for farm labor or what the growers claim is their need for farm labor. When the supply gets a little short the bars go down. Just check this sometime if you don't believe I am right. But what happens is this, the nationals who are admitted under visas to do farm labor shortly grow dissatisfied with the wages that they are able to make and since they aren't bound by contract the way a regular bracero is, they frift into the general labor market, they go into the cities and competition with domestic workers gets that much keener.

You ask if I have reccomendatiosn to make, yes, I have many reccomendations. I will give you just a few of them at this time. I would say in the first place, that many of the problems which are caused by the bracero program could be alleviated if the men were organized under socail workers with a definite set of welfare purposes. There should be recreation planned and provided on a systematic basis. There should be somebody to write letters for the men if they need help. Arrangements should be made to visit the men when they are sick in the hospital. They should be provided with reading matter and so forth. We had a case of a bracero in Indio who was picking dates, in this kind of work the men have to climb ladders maybe 50 ft. high, this man fell from the top of his ladder and his back was completely smashed. He was paralyzed and has had to be kept here in the Riverside Hospital ever since and this was last fall. When he had the accident. Now, nobody there at the hospital was able to speak Spanish so all day long all this

fellow could do was lie and in his bed and stare at the ceiling with nothing to read, nobody to talk to, anything. The case came to our attention and we have now made arrangements to transport some of the men from the local camp into the hospital regularly and things like that. But the whole matter should be put on an organized basis. What is required is a team of bilingral social workers without any vested interests in other words, without any interesting in perpetuating the program the way the growers and all their representatives haturally have.

Another thing which I can mention and incidentally, I am talking here about very practical things, rather small things it would be very simple for somebody to check to make sure the men are sending money back to ~~chi~~ their families regularly and in ~~suffi~~ sufficient quantities to support their families in a decent way. It should be entirely possible to put into the contract a provision that if a man failed in this duty his contract would be ended and he would be sent home.

I will close by giving you a few random stories that I haver- heard about the local situation. For one thing the store here at the Riversiade camp is owned by the Association and somebody is making plenty of money out of that. Every thing the men do at the camp they have to pay for. Did you know that if they want to play a game of billiards on the camp pool table they have to pay 25¢. Another thing that I am told is that the men are not allowed to have cars and yet the camp itself provides no tranportation, there are no ~~buses~~ busses running from the camp into town so the men are up against it there. I can tell you of a way that this has worked a hardship that I personally know about. We give classes in ~~the~~ citizenship and in the English language here at the Settlement house and for a time ~~we hav-~~ several of ~~themen~~ the men from the camp were coming in here for those classes, but they had to drop out because transportation was such a problem.

Another thing I have heard and you will want to check me on this, because it is in a nature of a rumor, is that the men have no confidence whatsoever in the local Consul or have lost whatever confidence they may once have had. This obviously is a sad state of affairs since the Consul is one of the few epople who is to represent their side of things.